

Important Updates in Indian Political System

National judicial Appointment commission

□ According to the Statement of Objects and Reason of the Bill, there is a need for a broad based National Judicial Appointment Commission (NJAC), for making recommendations for selection of judges. The Bill seeks to enable equal participation of Judiciary and Executive, ensure that the appointments to the higher judiciary are more participatory, transparent and objective.

□ The Constitution (121st Amendment) Bill amends the provisions of the Constitution related to the appointment of Supreme Court and High Court judges, and the transfer of High Court judges.

Creation of the NJAC: Article 124 (2) of the Constitution provides that the President will make appointments of Supreme Court (SC) and High Court (HC) judges after consultation with the Chief Justice of India and other SC and HC judges as he considers necessary. The Bill amends Article 124 (2) of the Constitution to provide for a Commission, to be known as the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC). The NJAC would then make recommendations to the President for appointments of SC and HC judges.

Composition of the NJAC: A new Article, Article 124A provides for the composition of the NJAC. The NJAC would consist of:

- (i) Chief Justice of India (Chairperson)
- (ii) Two senior most Supreme Court Judges
- (iii) The Union Minister of Law and Justice
- (iv) Two eminent persons (to be nominated by a committee consisting of the Chief Justice of India, Prime Minister of India and the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha) Of the two eminent persons, one person would be from the SC/ST/OBC/minority communities or be a woman. The eminent persons shall be nominated for a period of three years and shall not be eligible for re-nomination.

Functions of the NJAC: A new Article, Article 124B, provides for the functions of the NJAC which include:

- (i) Recommending persons for appointment as Chief Justice of India, Judges of the Supreme Court, Chief Justices of High Courts and other Judges of High Courts;
- (ii) Recommending transfer of Chief Justices

and other Judges of High Courts from one High Court to any other High Court; and (iii) Ensuring that the persons recommended are of ability and integrity.

Power of Parliament to make law on

procedures: A new Article, Article 124C, enables Parliament to pass a law to: (i) regulate the procedure of appointments, and (ii) empower the NJAC to lay down the procedure for its functioning, and manner of selection of persons for appointment, through regulations.

Reference to Commission for filling up of vacancies

□ When a vacancy arises in the SC or HCs, the central government will make a reference to the NJAC.

□ Existing vacancies will be notified to the NJAC within thirty days of the Act entering into force.

□ When a vacancy arises due to the completion of term, a reference will be made to the NJAC, six months in advance.

□ For vacancies due to death or resignation, a reference must be made to the NJAC within thirty days of its occurrence.

Procedure for Selection of Supreme Court judges

□ **Chief Justice of India:** The NJAC shall recommend the senior most judge of the Supreme Court for appointment as Chief Justice of India. This is provided he is considered fit to hold the office.

□ **SC judges:** The NJAC shall recommend names of persons on the basis of their ability, merit and other criteria specified in the regulations.

□ **Veto power of members:** The NJAC shall not recommend a person for appointment if any two of its members do not agree to such recommendation.

Procedure for Selection of High Courts judges

□ **Chief Justices of HCs:** The NJAC is to recommend a Judge of a High Court to be the Chief Justice of a High Court on the basis of seniority across High Court judges. The ability, merit and other criteria of suitability as specified in the regulations would also be considered.

Appointment of other HC Judges:

– **Nominations:** Nominations shall be sought from Chief Justice of the concerned High Court for appointments of HC judges.

– **Eliciting views:** The Commission shall nominate names for appointment of HC judges and forward such names to the Chief Justice of the concerned HCs for his views. In both cases, the Chief Justice of the HC shall consult two senior most judges of that HC and any other judges and advocates as specified in the regulations.

– **Views of the Governor and CM:** The NJAC shall elicit the views of the Governor and Chief Minister of the state before making recommendations.

– **Veto power of members:** The NJAC shall not recommend a person for appointment if any two members of the Commission do not agree to such recommendation.

□ **Transfer of Chief Justices and High Court judges:**

– The NJAC is to make recommendations for transfer of Chief Justices and other judges of the High Courts.

– The procedure to be followed will be specified in the regulations.

Power of the President to require reconsideration

□ The President may require the NJAC to reconsider the recommendations made by it.

□ If the NJAC makes a unanimous recommendation after such reconsideration, the President shall make the appointment accordingly.

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Bill , 2014

□ The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Bill, 2014 was introduced by the Minister of Women and Child Development, Maneka Gandhi, in the Lok Sabha on August 12, 2014. It repeals the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000.

□ **Objectives:** The Bill seeks to achieve the objectives of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children as ratified by India on December 11, 1992. It specifies procedural safeguards in cases of children in conflict with law. It seeks to address challenges in the existing Act such as delays in adoption processes, high pendency of cases, accountability of institutions, etc. The Bill further seeks to address children in the 16-18 age group, in conflict with law, as an increased incidence of crimes committed by them have been reported over the past few years.

□ **Coverage:** The Bill defines a child as anyone less than 18 years of age. However, a special provision has been inserted for the possibility of trying 16-18 year olds committing heinous offences, as adults. A heinous offence is defined as one for which the minimum punishment under the Indian Penal Code is seven years.

□ **General principles:** These include (i) principle of presumption of innocence for any child up to the age of 18 years; (ii) principle of best interest for all decisions taken regarding the child; (iii) principle of institutionalisation stating that a child shall be placed in institutional care as a step of last resort, etc.

□ **Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs):** One or more JJBs to be constituted, for each district, for dealing with children in conflict with law. JJBs are composed of a Metropolitan or Judicial Magistrate and two social workers, one of whom shall be a woman.

□ Powers and responsibilities of the JJBs include: (i) ensuring legal aid for a child; (ii) adjudicating and disposing of cases related to children in conflict with law; (iii) conducting regular inspection of adult jails to ensure no child is lodged in such jails and other inspection visits and; (iv) conducting inspection visits of residential facilities for such children.

□ **Children's Court:** A Children's Court is a Court established under the Commissions for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005 or a Special Court under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012. It will try 16-18 year olds that commit heinous offences, after confirming that they are fit to be tried as adults. It ensures that a child in conflict with law is sent to a place of safety until he attains the age of 21 years, after which he is transferred to a jail. During the child's stay in the place of safety, reformative services such as counselling, etc. shall be provided. The Court shall ensure periodic follow up reports by District Child Protection Units.

□ **Child Welfare Committees (CWCs):** States shall constitute one or more CWCs for each district for dealing with children in need of care and protection. The powers and responsibilities of a CWC include: (i) conducting inquiries; (ii) selecting registered institutions for the placement of a child and;

(iii) addressing orphans, abandoned children, surrendered children and sexually abused children, etc.

□ **Special Juvenile Police Units (SJPU) and Child**

Welfare Police Officers: An SJPU will be established in each district, consisting of a police officer and two social workers. One Child Welfare Police Officer will be present in every police station.

□ **Adoption:** Prospective adoptive parents must be consenting. A single or divorced person can also adopt, but a single male cannot adopt a girl child. Parents must be physically fit, financially sound, and mentally alert and motivated to adopt. Regulations regarding adoption shall be framed by the Central Adoption Resource Authority.

□ **Penalties:** Any official, who does not report an abandoned or orphaned child within 24 hours, is liable to imprisonment up to six months or fine of Rs 10,000 or both. The penalty for non-registration of child care institutions is imprisonment up to one year or fine of one lakh rupees, or both. The penalty for giving a child intoxicating liquor, narcotic or psychotropic substances is imprisonment up to seven years or fine of one lakh rupees, or both.

The Lokpal and Lokayuktas and other related Law (Amendment) Bill, 2014

□ The Bill amends the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013 and the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946.

□ The Lokpal Act provides for a Selection Committee for making appointments to the Lokpal. The Committee includes the Leader of Opposition (LoP) in the Lok Sabha. The Bill amends this provision to state that the Leader of the single largest Opposition party in the House would be part of the Selection Committee, in the absence of a recognised LoP in the Lok Sabha.

□ The Lokpal Act states that one eminent jurist, to be recommended by the other members of the Selection Committee, will also be part of that Committee. The Bill adds that such eminent jurist is to be nominated for a single term of three years.

□ The Act states that no appointment of a Chairperson or member of the Lokpal shall be invalidated for reasons of vacancy in the Selection Committee. The Bill adds that the

proceedings of the Committee would not be invalidated also on account of absence of a member.

□ The Lokpal Act requires the Selection Committee to constitute a Search Committee to make nominations for appointments to the Lokpal. The Bill clarifies that no proceedings related to the Search Committee shall be invalidated for reasons of: (i) vacancy or absence of member in the Selection Committee, or (ii) absence of a person in the Search Committee.

□ Under the Lokpal Act, the Secretary to the Lokpal is of the rank of Secretary. The Bill amends this provision to now mandate that the Secretary to the Lokpal would be in the rank of Additional Secretary.

□ The Lokpal Act requires that the Director of Inquiry and Director of Prosecution of the Lokpal would be at least of the rank of Additional Secretary. The Bill now requires that these posts be filled by officers of at least the rank of Joint Secretary.

□ Under the Lokpal Act, the benches of the Lokpal would sit in New Delhi, and other places to be specified in the regulations. The Bill states that the headquarters of the Lokpal would be in the NCR, and the seat of benches would be specified in the regulations.

□ Under the Lokpal Act, the power of the Lokpal to grant sanction for prosecution overrides provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code, Section 6A of the Delhi Special Police Establishment (DSPE) Act, 1946 or the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988. The Bill omits Section 6 A of the DSPE Act. This follows from a Supreme Court judgment which struck down Section 6A of the DSPE Act.

□ The Lokpal Act requires a public servant to declare his assets within thirty days of assuming office. The details of such declaration would include: (i) liabilities and (ii) assets jointly owned by him, his spouse and dependent children, or assets for which they are beneficiaries.

The Bill replaces this provision to require that the declaration contain information of all his assets, including: (i) movable and immovable property owned, inherited,

acquired, or held on lease by him or his family; and (ii) debts and liabilities incurred directly or indirectly by him. Provisions related to public servants under the Representation of the People Act, 1951, All India Services Act, 1951, and rules and regulations prescribed in this regard would also apply.

▫ The DSPE Act provides for a Directorate of Prosecution which is headed by a Director, of a rank not below that of Joint Secretary, for conducting prosecution of cases. The Bill introduces eligibility criteria in this regard. It states that an officer from the Indian Legal Services, of the rank of Joint Secretary and eligible to become a Special Public Prosecutor may be appointed as Director of Prosecution. In the absence of such a candidate, an advocate with at least 15 years experience in handling cases of corruption, money laundering, etc. may be appointed.

▫ The Bill adds that if there is a difference of opinion between the Director and the Director of Prosecution, the matter is to be referred to the Attorney General, whose advice shall be binding.

▫ The Bill introduces provisions that empower the centre to make rules in relation to the DSPE Act.

The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (Amendment) Ordinance, 2014

▫ The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (Amendment) Ordinance, 2014 was promulgated on December 31, 2014. The Ordinance amends the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (LARR Act 2013).

▫ The LARR Act 2013 outlines the process to be followed when land is acquired for a public purpose. Key changes made by the Ordinance are:

▫ **Provisions of other laws in consonance with the LARR 2013:** The LARR Act 2013 exempted 13 laws (such as the National Highways Act, 1956 and the Railways Act,

1989) from its purview. However, the LARR Act 2013 required that the compensation, rehabilitation, and resettlement provisions of these 13 laws be brought in consonance with the LARR Act 2013, within a year of its enactment, through a notification. The Ordinance brings the compensation, rehabilitation, and resettlement provisions of these 13 laws in consonance with the LARR Act 2013.

▫ **Exemption of five categories of land use from certain provisions:** The Ordinance creates five special categories of land use: (i) defence, (ii) rural infrastructure, (iii) affordable housing, (iv) industrial corridors, and (v) infrastructure projects including Public Private Partnership (PPP) projects where the central government owns the land.

▫ The LARR Act 2013 requires that the consent of 80% of land owners is obtained for private projects and that the consent of 70% of land owners be obtained for PPP projects. The Ordinance exempts the five categories mentioned above from this provision of the Act.

▫ In addition, the Ordinance permits the government to exempt projects in these five categories from the following provisions, through a notification:

(i) The LARR Act 2013 requires that a Social Impact Assessment be conducted to identify affected families and calculate the social impact when land is acquired.

(ii) The LARR Act 2013 imposes certain restrictions on the acquisition of irrigated multi-cropped land and other agricultural land. For example, irrigated multi-cropped land cannot be acquired beyond a limit specified by the government.

▫ **Return of unutilised land:** The LARR Act 2013 required that if land acquired under it remained unutilised for five years, it was returned to the original owners or the land bank. The Ordinance states that the period after which unutilised land will need to be returned will be five years, or any period specified at the time of setting up the project, whichever is later.

▫ **Time period for retrospective application:** The LARR Act 2013 states that the Land Acquisition Act, 1894 will continue

to apply in certain cases, where an award has been made under the 1894 Act. However, if such an award was made five years or more before the enactment of the LARR Act 2013, and the physical possession of land has not been taken or compensation has not been paid, the LARR Act 2013 will apply.

□ The Ordinance states that in calculating this time period, any period during which the proceedings of acquisition were held up: (i) due to a stay order of a court, or (ii) a period specified in the award of a Tribunal for taking possession, or (iii) any period where possession has been taken but the compensation is lying deposited in a court or any account, will not be counted.

□ **Other changes:** The LARR Act 2013 excluded the acquisition of land for private hospitals and private educational institutions from its purview. The Ordinance removes this restriction.

□ While the LARR Act 2013 was applicable for the acquisition of land for private companies, the Ordinance changes this to acquisition for „private entities“. A private entity is an entity other than a government entity, and could include a proprietorship, partnership, company, corporation, non-profit organisation, or other entity under any other law.

□ The LARR Act 2013 stated that if an offence is committed by the government, the head of the department would be deemed guilty unless he could show that the offence was committed without his knowledge, or that he had exercised due diligence to prevent the commission of the offence. The Ordinance replaces this provision and states that if an offence is committed by a government official, he cannot be prosecuted without the prior sanction of the government.

Supreme Court sets up ‘Social Justice Bench’ to deal with social issues

Supreme Court has set up a special ‘Social Justice Bench’ in order to exclusively hear cases concerning social issues particularly those related to women, children and underprivileged sections of society. The main intention of setting up ‘Social Justice

Bench’ is to provide specialised approach which needed for dealing with these cases. The special bench will comprise justices Madan B Lokur and U U Lalit and from 12th December the bench which will assemble every Friday at 2 PM.

This bench will ensure early disposal of such cases and to bring fruits of the rights provided under the Constitution to people.

It will deal specially with the matters relating to society and its members, to secure social justice, one of the ideals of the Indian Constitution.

Under the domain of social justice, several cases highlighting social issues are included. They are

□ Release of surplus food grains lying in stocks for the use of people living in the drought-affected areas to frame a fresh scheme for public distribution of food grains.

□ To take steps to prevent untimely death of women and children for want of nutritious food.

□ Providing hygienic meal besides issues relating to children to provide night shelter to destitute and homeless.

□ To provide medical facilities to all the citizens irrespective of their economic condition.

□ To provide hygienic drinking water.

□ To provide safety and secure living condition for the fair gender who are forced into prostitution etc.

Thus, by setting up the ‘Social Justice Bench’ SC is trying to play a proactive role in order to meet the goals of the Constitution by providing social justice to everyone.

1. National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Commission, 01 Jan 2015

The Government has replaced Planning Commission with a new institution named NITI Commission (National

Institution for Transforming India). The institution will serve as 'Think Tank' of the Government directional and policy dynamo. NITI Commission will provide Governments at the central and state levels with relevant strategic and technical advice across the spectrum of key elements of policy, this includes matters of national and international import on the economic front, dissemination of best practices from within the country as well as from other nations, the infusion of new policy ideas and specific issue-based support.

In essence, effective governance in India will rest on the following pillars:-

- a. Pro-people agenda that fulfils the aspirations of the society as well as individual,**
- b. Pro-active in anticipating and responding to their needs,**
- c. Participative, by involvement of citizens,**
- d. Empowering women in all aspects.**
- e. Inclusion of all groups, with special attention to the economically weak section, the SC, ST and OBC communities, the rural sector and farmers, youth and all categories of minorities.**
- f. Equality of opportunity to our country's youth,**
- g. Transparency through the use of technology to make government visible and responsive.**

Governance, across the public and private domains, is the concern of society as a whole. Everyone has a stake in ensuring good governance and effective delivery of services. Creating Jan Chetna, therefore, becomes crucial for people's initiative. In the past, governance may have been rather narrowly construed as public governance. In today's changed dynamics - with 'public' services often being delivered by 'private' entities, and the greater scope for 'participative citizenry', governance encompasses and involves everyone.

The institutional framework of government has developed and matured over the years. This has allowed the development of domain expertise which allows us the chance to increase the specificity of functions given to institutions. Specific to the planning process, there is a need to separate as well as energize the distinct 'process' of governance from the 'strategy' of governance.

In the context of governance structures, the changed requirements of our country, point to the need for setting up an institution that serves as a Think Tank of the government - a directional and policy dynamo. The proposed institution has to provide governments at the central and state levels with relevant strategic and technical advice across the spectrum of key elements of policy. This includes matters of national and international import on the economic front, dissemination of best practices from within the country as well as from other nations, the infusion of new policy ideas and specific issue-based support. The institution has to be able to respond to the changing and more integrated world that India is part of.

An important evolutionary change from the past will be replacing a centre-to-state one-way flow of policy by a genuine and continuing partnership with the states. The institution must have the necessary resources, knowledge, skills and, ability to act with speed to provide the strategic policy vision for the government as well as deal with contingent issues.

Perhaps most importantly, the institution must adhere to the tenet that while incorporating positive influences from the world, no single model can be transplanted from outside into the Indian scenario. We need to find our own strategy for growth. The new institution has to zero in on what will work in and for India. It will be a Bharatiya approach to development.

The institution to give life to these aspirations is the NITI Commission (National Institution for Transforming India). This is being proposed after extensive consultation across the spectrum of stakeholders including inter alia state governments, domain experts and relevant institutions.

The NITI Aayog will work towards the following objectives:

- 1.To evolve a shared vision of national development priorities, sectors and strategies with the active involvement of States in the light of national objectives. The vision of the NITI Commission will then provide a framework 'national agenda' for the Prime Minister and the Chief Ministers to provide impetus to.
2. To foster cooperative federalism through structured support initiatives and mechanisms with the States on a continuous basis, recognizing that strong States make a strong nation.
- 3.To develop mechanisms to formulate credible plans at the village level and aggregate these progressively at higher levels of government.
- 4.To ensure, on areas that are specifically referred to it, that the interests of national security are incorporated in economic strategy and policy.
- 5.To pay special attention to the sections of our society that may be at risk of not benefitting adequately from economic progress.
- 6.To design strategic and long term policy and programme frameworks & initiatives, and monitor their progress and their efficacy. The lessons learnt through monitoring and feedback will be used for making innovative improvements, including necessary mid-course corrections.
- 7.To provide advice and encourage partnerships between key stakeholders and national and international like-minded Think Tanks, as well as educational and policy research institutions.

8.To create a knowledge, innovation and entrepreneurial support system through a collaborative community of national and international experts, practitioners and other partners.

9.To offer a platform for resolution of inter-sectoral and inter-departmental issues in order to accelerate the implementation of the development agenda.

10.To maintain a state-of-the-art Resource Centre, be a repository of research on good governance and best practices in sustainable and equitable development as well as help their dissemination to stake-holders.

11.To actively monitor and evaluate the implementation of programmes and initiatives, including the identification of the needed resources so as to strengthen the probability of success and scope of delivery.

12.To focus on technology upgradation and capacity building for implementation of programmes and initiatives.

13.To undertake other activities as may be necessary in order to further the execution of the national development agenda, and the objectives mentioned above.

The NITI Aayog will comprise the following:-

- 1.Prime Minister of India as the Chairperson.
- 2.**Governing Council** comprising the Chief Ministers of all the States and Lt. Governors of Union Territories.
- 3.**Regional Councils** will be formed to address specific issues and contingencies impacting more than one state or a region. These will be formed for a specified tenure. The Regional Councils will be convened by the Prime Minister and will comprise of the Chief Ministers of States and Lt. Governors of Union Territories in the region. These will be chaired by the Chairperson of the NITI Commission or his nominee.
- 4.Experts, specialists and practitioners with relevant domain knowledge as

special invitees nominated by the Prime Minister.

The full-time organizational framework will comprise of, in addition to the P M as the Chairperson:-

- i. Vice-Chairperson: To be appointed by the Prime Minister.
- ii. Full-time Members.
- iii. Part-time members: Maximum of 2 from leading universities research
- iv. organizations and other relevant institutions in an ex-officio capacity. Part time members will be on a rotational basis.
- v. Ex Officio members: Maximum of 4 members of the Union Council of Ministers to be nominated by the Prime Minister.
- vi. Chief Executive Officer : To be appointed by the Prime Minister for a fixed tenure, in the rank of Secretary to the Government of India.

Through its commitment to a cooperative federalism, promotion of citizen engagement, egalitarian access to opportunity, participative and adaptive governance and increasing use of technology, the NITI Commission will seek to provide a critical directional and strategic input into the governance process. This, along with being the incubator of ideas for effective governance, will be the core mission of NITI Commission .

Model of Bharatiya Governance: The Modi Government on Thursday unveiled its 'Bharatiya' governance model in the resolution for setting up the NITI (National Institution for Transforming India) Commission. The resolution, approved by the Cabinet, reaffirms that India is a diverse country with distinct languages, faiths and cultural ecosystems. "This diversity has enriched the totality of the Indian experience," the resolution says. Politically too, India

has embraced a greater measure of pluralism which has reshaped the federal consensus, it says. "States do not want to be mere appendages of the Centre... They seek a decisive say in determining the architecture of economic growth and development." India no longer seeks the alleviation of poverty, states the resolution, but rather its elimination. "Poverty elimination remains one of the most important metrics by which alone we should measure our success as a nation."

The essence of effective governance is defined to include pro-people agenda, citizens' participation, all-round women empowerment, equality of opportunity to the youth and transparency. Inclusiveness with special attention to the socially and economically disadvantaged sections and minorities is also included in the scheme of effective governance.

Government meets target of opening 10-crore accounts under PM Jan Dhan Yojana

Government has met its target of opening 10 crore bank accounts under its flagship scheme of **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)**. This target was met a month before its revised deadline of 26 January 2015.

Key facts

- As of 24 December 2014, 10 crore accounts have been opened under the PMJDY scheme with a collective deposit amounting to Rs 7,690.89 crore.
- In this regard, a total of 7.74 crore RuPay debit cards have also been issued by banks to beneficiaries.
- States likes Goa, Kerala, Tripura and Madhya Pradesh and union territories (UT's) of Chandigarh, Puducherry and Lakshadweep have opened at least one bank account in every targeted household i.e. they have attained 100 per cent financial inclusion under PMJDY .
- However, nearly two-thirds of all opened bank accounts continue to have zero balance

and 7.35 crore bank accounts are currently dormant.

About Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)

It was launched on 28th August 2014 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the goal of eradicating financial untouchability of the poor by opening at least one bank account for every family in the country in less than six months. It seeks to financially empower the poor by providing them access to formal banking system. Initially, after its launch the scheme had a target of opening 7.5 crore bank accounts by 26 January, 2015, but later it was revised and raised to 10 crore bank accounts.

Lok Sabha passes Regional Rural Banks (Amendment) Bill, 2014

Lok Sabha has passed the **Regional Rural Banks (Amendment) Bill, 2014**. It was passed by voice vote. This bill amends **Regional Rural Banks Act, 1976** and aims to strengthen the Regional Rural Banks and deepen their financial inclusion.

Key facts

▫ **Authorised capital:** This amendment bill increases the authorised capital of each Regional Rural Bank (RRB) from Rs 5 crore to Rs 2000 crore divided into Rs 200 crore of fully paid share of Rs 10 each. As per the parent Act the Rs 5 crore share capital of RRBs is split into 5 lakh shares of Rs 100 each.

▫ **Issued capital:** It also provides that the authorised capital issued by any RRB's shall not be reduced below Rs 1 crore and shares in all cases to be fully paid up shares of Rs 10 each.

▫ **Shareholding:** The Bill allows RRBs to raise capital from sources other than the central and state governments, and sponsor banks.

▫ **Board of directors:** The Bill adds provision that any person who is a director of an RRB is not eligible to be on the Board of Directors of another RRB. It also mentions that directors will be elected by shareholders based on the total amount of equity share capital issued to such shareholders.

▫ **Tenure of directors:** The bill raises the tenure of directors to 3 years from existing 2 years. The Bill also states that no director can hold office for a total period exceeding six years.

▫ **Closure and balancing of books:** The parent Act had provision which mentioned that the balance books of RRBs should be closed and balanced by 31st December every year.

However this amendment bill changes this date to 31st March in order to bring RRB's balancing of books in uniformity with the financial year.

Rajasthan Government fixes minimum educational qualification for panchayats elections

Rajasthan government has decided to fix minimum educational qualification as condition for aspiring candidates in panchayats elections. In this regard, Rajasthan Governor Kalyan Singh has approved the **Rajasthan Panchayati Raj (Second Amendment) Ordinance-2014** after it was notified by the state government. This ordinance will amend the **Rajasthan Panchayati Raj Act 1994** and has provision for educational qualifications for candidates contesting zila parishad and panchayat samiti polls.

Key Provisions of Ordinance

▫ Contestant for Zila Parishad or Panchayat Samiti elections should have the minimum qualification of secondary education i.e. Class 10 from the state board or any approved institution or board.

Government initiate's scheme to protect Endangered Languages of India

Union Government has initiated a Scheme known as "**Protection and Preservation of Endangered Languages of India**".

It was announced by the Union Human Resource Development Minister, Smt. Smriti Irani in a written reply to the Lok Sabha question.

Key facts of the scheme

▫ As part of this Scheme, all the mother tongues/languages of India spoken by less than 10,000 people will be considered as they will be protected, preserved and documented by the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), Mysore.

▫ Technology will play key role in the preservation of endangered languages and it will be an integral part of it.

▫ Dictionaries and basic grammars in all the endangered languages/mother tongues are

prepared in digital format. In addition, talking dictionaries in the endangered languages / mother tongues will be prepared with the help of technology.

- The cultural and ethno-linguistic aspects of the languages or mother tongues and indigenous knowledge system of the communities will be video-graphed and stored electronically for archival and retrieval purposes.

- A digital map with linguistic/cultural words with actual pronunciation for accounting variation in speech is also part of the scheme.

Government's DBTL becomes world's largest direct benefit transfer scheme

Governments ambitious **Direct Benefit Transfer on LPG (DBTL)** has become the world's largest direct benefit transfer scheme after 2.5 crore households received about 550 crore rupees since 15th November 2014.

It has surpassed number of beneficiaries in direct benefit transfer programmes in countries like China and Brazil.

Background

Earlier, government had launched DBTL scheme in 54 districts from 15th November 2014 and planning to launch it all over the country from 1st January 2015.

Key facts about Direct Benefit Transfer for LPG (DBTL) scheme

- This scheme gives cash subsidy on cooking gas directly to consumers so that they can buy cooking gas at market price.

- It aims to curb leakages, preventing black-marketing in cash subsidy on cooking gas.

- As primary option, LPG consumers who join the DBTL scheme receive the LPG cash subsidy either by linking their Aadhaar number to the LPG and bank database.

- In case of secondary option, consumers may get the subsidy directly into their accounts without linking it with Aadhaar.

Thus, DBTL scheme is will help government to save upto Rs 14,000 crores in subsidies.

Prohibit Manual Scavenging passed by Parliament

The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Bill, 2013 was passed by Parliament in September

2013. It came into force in December 2013. The Act prohibits the employment of manual scavengers, the manual cleaning of sewers and septic tanks without protective equipment, and the construction of insanitary latrines. Key features of the Act are:

- **Definitions:** A “manual scavenger” is a person who manually cleans or disposes of human excreta in an insanitary latrine, an open drain, or a railway track. An “insanitary latrine” requires human excreta to be cleaned manually.

- **Survey of insanitary latrines:** Each local authority, cantonment board and railway authority is responsible for surveying insanitary latrines within its jurisdiction. They shall also construct sanitary community latrines.

- **Conversion or demolition of insanitary latrines:** Each occupier of insanitary latrines shall be responsible for converting or demolishing the latrine at his own cost. If he fails to do so, the local authority shall convert the latrine and recover the cost from him. State governments may provide assistance to occupiers for converting latrines. However, non-receipt of assistance shall not be a valid ground to use an insanitary latrine beyond nine months of the law in force.

- **Identification and rehabilitation of manual scavengers:** All persons listed as manual scavengers shall be rehabilitated with a one-time cash assistance, scholarship for their children, and a residential plot with financial assistance for constructing a house. One adult member of the family will be trained in a livelihood skill and given a monthly stipend of at least Rs 3,000 during training. A subsidy and concessional loan shall also be given for taking up an alternative occupation.
